

R 191713Z MAY 03
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3942
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 001086

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2013
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: CASABLANCA ATTACKS: WHO ARE THE SALAFIYAH
JIHADIYAH?

REF: A. 02 RABAT 2234
[1](#)B. 02 RABAT 2045
[1](#)C. 02 RABAT 1167

CLASSIFIED BY: DCM HELEN LA LIME. REASON 1.5 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. COMMENTING ON THE MAY 16 BOMBINGS ON MOROCCAN TELEVISION MAY 18, PM DRISS JETTOU INDIRECTLY CRITICIZED THE LEGAL ISLAMIST JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY (PJD), AS WELL AS THE LEFTIST MOROCCAN HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION (AMDH), FOR THEIR PAST CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT OVER ALLEGED MISTREATMENT OF DETAINEES BELONGING TO WHAT JETTOU CALLED "THE SALAFIYAH JIHADIYAH MOVEMENT." ALSO MAY 18, JUSTICE MINISTER MOHAMED BOUZOUBAA ASSOCIATED THE MAY 16 BOMBINGS WITH THE GROUP "SIRAT AL MOUSTAQIM" (THE RIGHT PATH). SALAFIYAH JIHADIYAH AND SIRAT AL MOUSTAQIM, ALONG WITH "TAKFIR WAL HIJRA" (RENUNCIATION AND REPUDIATION), ARE TERMS USED BY THE PRESS AND SOMETIMES THE GOVERNMENT TO DESCRIBE VIOLENT ISLAMIST FRINGE GROUPS, WHICH BURST ONTO THE SCENE IN MOROCCO WITH A SERIES OF VIOLENT ACTS IN 2002 LEADING TO A NUMBER OF ARRESTS (REFTELS). WHILE MANY MOROCCANS HAVE BEEN HORRIFIED BY THE NATURE OF THE CRIMES ATTRIBUTED TO THESE GROUPS, AND THE PJD HAS REGULARLY ACCUSED THE GOM OF MISTREATING DETAINEES IN THE NAME OF COUNTERING THEM, CONVENTIONAL WISDOM HAS MAINTAINED THAT (1) SUCH GROUPS HAD NO NATIONAL ORGANIZATION, LEADERSHIP, OR CHAIN OF COMMAND, NO LINKS WITH EACH OTHER OR WITH FOREIGN ORGANIZATIONS, AND ESSENTIALLY CONSISTED OF DISORGANIZED, RAGTAG BANDS, AND (2) THAT THE AUTHORITIES HAD THE THREAT WELL IN HAND. THESE ASSUMPTIONS MAY HAVE TO BE REVISED, IF THE MAY 16 BOMBERS TURN OUT TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS FRINGE, AS THE STATEMENTS BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND JUSTICE MINISTER SEEM TO INDICATE. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) IN TELEVISED COMMENTS MAY 18, PRIME MINISTER DRISS JETTOU CRITICIZED, WITHOUT NAMING THEM, THOSE WHO, IN THE NAME OF HUMAN RIGHTS, HAD CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS HANDLING OF THE RECENT TRIALS OF MEMBERS OF THE "SALAFIYAH JIHADIYAH MOVEMENT." ALSO IN TELEVISED COMMENTS THE SAME DAY, JUSTICE MINISTER MOHAMED BOUZOUBAA SAID THAT SOME OF THE MAY 17 TERRORISTS WERE LINKED TO A GROUP CALLED "SIRAT AL MOUSTAQIM" (THE RIGHT PATH). THE PRECISE MEANINGS OF THE TERMS "SALAFIYAH JIHADIYAH" AND "SIRAT AL MOUSTAQIM" CAN BE DIFFICULT TO DEVINE, AS THEY TEND TO BE USED INTERCHANGEABLY IN THE MEDIA AND BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO REFER TO A VIOLENT ISLAMIST FRINGE, ON WHICH THE EMBASSY HAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (SEE REFTELS).

[1](#)3. (U) FOR EXAMPLE, IN FEBRUARY 2002 IN A POOR NEIGHBORHOOD OF CASABLANCA, A BAND OF RELIGIOUS FANATICS OPERATING UNDER THE NAME "SIRAT AL MOUSTAQIM," LED BY SPIRITUAL LEADER MILOUDI ZAKARIA, STONED TO DEATH A RESIDENT OF THE DISTRICT WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY QUARRELED WITH A MEMBER OF THE BAND OVER THE ISSUE OF ALCOHOL USE BY THE VICTIM. ZAKARIA AND 13 COMPANIONS WERE TRIED AND CONVICTED IN CASABLANCA FOR THE MURDER. IN MAY 2002 FEZ MOSQUE PREACHER MOHAMED ABDELWAHED RAFIKI (ABU HAFS) WAS ARRESTED AND SENTENCED TO SIX MONTHS IN PRISON (SUBSEQUENTLY REDUCED TO THREE MONTHS) FOR, AMONG OTHER INFRACTIONS, INCITING FOLLOWERS TO ATTACK INDIVIDUALS PERCEIVED TO BE BEHAVING IN AN UN-ISLAMIC MANNER. ABU HAFS HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED IN THE PRESS AS A LEADER OF THE SALAFIYAH JIHADIYAH.

[1](#)4. (U) YOUSSEF FIKRI, DESCRIBED AS THE "EMIR" (RELIGIOUS LEADER) OF THE SALAFIYAH JIHADIYAH, AND ALSO AS THE LEADER OF

THE MOVEMENT "TAKFIR WAL HIJRA" (RENUNCIATION AND REPUDIATION), WAS ARRESTED IN JUNE 2002 ALONG WITH EIGHT FOLLOWERS AND SUBSEQUENTLY TRIED FOR A SERIES OF BLOODTHIRSTY CRIMES, COMMITTED IN VARIOUS CITIES IN MOROCCO, WHICH INCLUDED KILLING VICTIMS AND DISMEMBERING THEM. (THIS GROUP BEGAN A HUNGER STRIKE WHILE IN PRISON IN MAY 2003.) THE COMMON THREAD UNITING MILOUDI'S, HAFS', AND FIKRI'S GROUPS IS VIGILANTE ACTION AGAINST INDIVIDUALS PERCEIVED TO BE ENGAGING IN UN-ISLAMIC BEHAVIOUR.

15. (U) MOST MOROCCANS WERE SHOCKED, NOT ONLY BY THE DETAILS OF THESE CRIMES LAST YEAR, BUT ALSO BY THE VERY EXISTENCE OF SUCH GROUPS IN THE MOROCCAN BODY POLITIC, HERETOFORE UNSUSPECTED. (AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME AS HAFS' ARREST IN MAY 2002, THE EXISTENCE OF THE AL QAIDA CELL THAT PLANNED ATTACKS ON U.S. SHIPPING IN THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR WAS REVEALED.) INEVITABLE COMPARISONS WITH ALGERIA CAME UP. AMONG TRADITIONAL ISLAMISTS, HOWEVER, AND PARTICULARLY THE LEGAL JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY (PJD), THERE WAS A TENDENCY TO SEE THE ARRESTS AND THE NEWS REPORTS AS A PLOT FABRICATED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO DISCREDIT ALL ISLAMISTS IN THE RUN-UP TO SEPTEMBER 2002 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE PJD, JOINED BY THE FAR LEFT, AS REPRESENTED BY THE MOROCCAN HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION (AMDH), KEPT UP A STEADY DRUMBEAT OF CRITICISM OF THE GOM FOR ALLEGED MISTREATMENT OF DETAINEES ASSOCIATED WITH THE VIOLENT ISLAMIST FRINGE. IT WAS THESE CRITICISMS THAT PM JETTOU REFERRED TO IN HIS COMMENTS OF MAY 18.

16. (C) WHILE SOME MOROCCANS WERE ALARMED BY THE EMERGENCE IN MOROCCO OF THE VIOLENT ISLAMIST FRINGE AND OTHERS THOUGHT THE WHOLE PHENOMENON A GOM FABRICATION, THERE HAS BEEN UNTIL NOW A GENERAL CONSENSUS AROUND TWO MAIN POINTS. THE FIRST WAS THAT THERE WAS NO COHERENT NATIONAL ORGANIZATION TO WHICH MEMBERS OF THE FRINGE BELONGED, AND NO OVERALL LEADER OR CHAIN OF COMMAND. THE THINKING WENT THAT THE THREAT, SUCH AS IT WAS, WAS POSED BY A FEW RAGTAG BANDS, WITH NO LINKS TO EACH OTHER OR TO FOREIGN ORGANIZATIONS. THE SECOND PIECE OF CONVENTIONAL WISDOM WAS THAT THE GOM, AND SPECIFICALLY THE INTERIOR MINISTRY, HAD THE GROUPS WELL IN HAND AND UNDER CONTROL. BOTH ASSUMPTIONS WILL NOW HAVE TO BE REVISED, IF THE MAY 16 BOMBERS INDEED PROVE TO BE DRAWN FROM THESE VIOLENT GROUPS. WHILE THERE IS MUCH THAT REMAINS TO BE REVEALED BY THE ONGOING INVESTIGATION, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE JUSTICE MINISTER WOULD PUBLICLY ASSOCIATE THE SALAFIYAH JIHADIYAH AND THE SIRAT EL MOUSTAQIM WITH MAY 16 UNLESS THERE WERE EVIDENCE POINTING IN THAT DIRECTION.

17. (C) MANY ON THE LEFT, WITH SEPTEMBER 2003 MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS IN MIND, WILL ATTEMPT TO TAR THE PJD WITH THE MAY 16 BRUSH. IF THE PERPETRATORS ARE ULTIMATELY PROVEN TO BE MEMBERS OF THE VIOLENT ISLAMIST FRINGE, THE PJD WILL HAVE SOME BACKFILLING TO DO. WE WILL EXAMINE IN SUBSEQUENT REPORTING REACTIONS TO MAY 16 BY THE PJD AS WELL AS BY THE JUSTICE AND CHARITY ORGANIZATION (JCO), MOROCCO'S OTHER PRINCIPAL (AND SEMI-LEGAL) ISLAMIST ORGANIZATION.

TUTWILER